

Poda, *Carcharodus flocciferus* Z., *Thymelicus sylvestris* Poda.

We returned from St. Cirq as we had come to it, by driving our car for 400 miles to and from Le Havre and using the night ferry to Southampton, with a night's stop on each journey in the Loire Valley to visit some of the chateaux. I had hoped to do some useful collecting on the way. But on the outward journey we had rain and grey skies until we were nearing the Dordogne, and even then saw few butterflies in the forests, which mostly still showed signs of damage from late frosts. On the return journey the weather was also poor, but a short stop on the edge of a marshy wood near Sées in Normandy gave me a pair of the Skipper *Carterocephalus palaemon* Pall. and a fine female *Mellicta parthenoides* Kef., which must be there near its north western limit.

Reference

Dufay, C. (1955). Les Lepidopteres du Périgord noir: I—“Macrolépidoptères” de la Région des Eyzies (Dordogne). *Rev. franc. Lépidoptérologie*, 15: 89-102.

Among the British Lepidoptera, 1973

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The beginning of the year was remarkable for its mild weather, and my first foray on 29th January was to Nomansland Common, two miles from my home, armed with only a flashlight. The mild conditions had caused a curiously premature emergence of *Agriopsis marginaria* F. along with many *Theria rupicapraria* D. & S.; and two males of *Apocheima pilosaria* D. & S. actually flew to the feeble beam of my torch. On subsequent evenings the same species were noted in considerable numbers in this and other nearby localities. My first outing with the portable m.v. turned out to be a traumatic experience to say the least! The date in question was 19th February and the location again Nomansland Common. Operations commenced at 6.00 p.m. and by 6.45 moths were flocking to the light, these including *Eupsilia transversa* Hufn., *Conistra vaccinii* L., an abundance of *A. pilosaria*, including five melanic specimens, and several *Agriopsis leucophaearia* D. & S., among which were several melanic specimens and one fine example of the form *marmorinaria*. At 7.15, deciding to leave the equipment running while I returned home for a quickly snatched meal, I was horrified on my return to find that the generator (with the exception of the petrol filler cap), choke and m.v. lamp had vanished into thin air! The rest of the evening was spent contacting the police and combing the area for signs of the truant equipment. However, it was not until the next day that it was found by a local inhabitant and handed over to the police; it had been thrown in the bushes by some well-wisher or other, but was fortunately little the worse for its adventure. But this time, the story had reached the ears of the local press and this culminated in the hirsute physiognomy of Yours Truly appearing on the front page of the local newspaper—fame at

last!! Undeterred by this contretemps I continued to operate the light in the area throughout the season although I never again left it unguarded.

The weather in the first half of March was less favourable than in 1972 and I made few trips until the 17th when the m.v. light was operated at Symondshyde Great Wood; the sky soon cleared, however, revealing a full moon, and of eight species of macro noted the best were singletons of *Achlya flavicornis* L. and *Ectropis bistortata* Goeze (a melanic specimen).

Warm days around this time brought out the first butterflies in the Harpenden area, notably *Aglais urticae* L., while *Tortricodes alternella* D. & S. was common in the oak-woods of Nomansland and Symondshyde. Portable m.v. at Nomansland Common on the 19th produced large numbers of moths, with *Orthosia munda* D. & S. in plenty, including one very dark specimen, and nine other species of macro.

The weather continued fine and warm and I decided to make a daytime trip to Ashtead Wood in Surrey with the express purpose of renewing my acquaintance with *Archearis parthenias* L. A number of these were seen, but only one fell to my net in two hours. Butterflies were very numerous on this beautiful day, several *Gonepteryx rhamni* L., all males, being seen, along with three each of *Inachis io* L. and *Polygonia c-album* L. A number of *A. urticae* were also noted. On the 29th, a trip to Symondshyde Great Wood produced nine species of macro to the portable m.v., the most noteworthy being a heavily barred specimen of *A. flavicornis* and a number of *Biston strataria* Hufn., including a heavily suffused example. *Diurnea fagella* D. & S. was abundant and in great variety.

Cold weather marked the first fortnight of April, and the only interesting occurrence was the emergence of my first female *Alsophila aescularia* D. & S. from Kentish stock on the 3rd. A marked improvement in conditions on the 14th found us in Surrey. Little was seen in the afternoon at Ashtead, but in the evening we found ourselves surrounded by other entomologists at Friday Street where the main quarry *Jodia croceago* D. & S. was conspicuous by its absence despite numerous m.v. and actinic lights and abundant sugar. Fifteen species of macro were noted by the assembled multitude and these included *Selenia tetralunaria* Hufn., *Colostygia multistrigaria* Haw., *Pachycnemia hippocastanaria* Hufn. and an abundance of *B. strataria*. Our static m.v. trap running at Box Hill produced only common *Orthosias* and one *Lycia hirtaria* Clerck. A beautiful day dawned on the 15th and we drove from Surrey to the New Forest where a specimen of *Aleucis distinctata* H-S. was taken from the wall of one of those legendary Hollands Wood toilet blocks. In the Forest over 50 males of *G. rhamni* were noted with the first few females. We travelled back from the New Forest via Whiteparish to the Chilterns stopping near Ibstone to examine some sallows at dusk. These bushes produced four specimens of *Cerastis leucographa* D. & S., along with numerous *O. gothica*, *O. stabilis*, *O. incerta*, a few *Cerastis*

rubricosa D. & S. and a single example of the plume *Emmelina monodactyla* L. A further *C. leucographa* was taken at shallows in Whippendell Wood near Watford on the 17th, while the trap in my garden produced a fine melanic male *L. hirtaria* and an early *Mamestra brassicae* L. among 50 moths, comprising ten species.

The fine weather of the past few days gave way to very cold and unsettled conditions which persisted over the Easter period, and an abortive beating foray on Nomansland Common was brought to an abrupt end by a violent hailstorm. This rather uninteresting period was enlivened by the emergence in my cages of a number of *Colocasia coryli* L. bred from a female taken in the previous May at Symondshyde Great Wood. Among these were several melanic specimens. Weather conditions improved a good deal after Easter and on the 26th the first of four *Cucullia chamomillae* D. & S. appeared in the garden m.v. trap. I then set off on a two-day expedition to the New Forest, arriving there around mid-day when inspection of the Hollands Wood toilet blocks produced nine species of Macrolepidoptera, including single specimens of *Polyphoca ridens* F. and *Odontosia carmelita* Esp. In the afternoon I visited a large tract of heathland near Lyndhurst, where a big area had been razed by fire the previous season and only four male *Saturnia pavonia* L. were seen. This paucity may have been owing to the fire, but was more likely due to the atrocious early summer of 1972, as few *pavonia* were seen in other localities untouched by the fire. In the evening, despite rather cool, clear and misty conditions, the portable m.v. was operated in Hollands Wood above the campsite and between 9.15 and midnight 20 species of macro were attracted, including *S. tetralunaria* (two males), *Eupithecia irriguata* Hübn. (two fine specimens), *Nola confusalis* H-S., *P. ridens* (three) and *L. hirtaria* (several, including two of a beautiful golden ground-colour). A makeshift trap supporting an actinic tube placed in a nearby blackthorn thicket produced little of interest, apart from a further male *S. tetralunaria*. The morning of the 27th was again very sunny and warm, but more cloud developed during the afternoon and apart from a few *Ematurga atomaria* L. and a further singleton male *S. pavonia*, little was seen on the wing near Lyndhurst. Nocturnal operations were conducted in clear but rather mild conditions; the actinic trap was left hidden among blackthorn bushes close to Hollands Wood while I went to the heathland near Lyndhurst overlooking Matley Bog to operate a portable m.v. light. The proceedings here opened with a run of *Eupithecia nanata* ssp. *angustea* Prout., most of which were in fine condition, to be followed by a number of *O. incerta* which varied a great deal in colour, and from then until 11.45 p.m. moths flocked to the light. In all 20 species of macro put in an appearance and I was very pleased to take two fine specimens of *O. carmelita*, two of *Cleora cinctaria* D. & S., and one very fresh *Clostera pigra* Hufn. The actinic trap in the blackthorn thicket also produced a number of moths including one specimen of *Panolis*

flammea D. & S., and the camp lights attracted the first *Diaphora mendica* Clerck. of the season among 11 species.

The first of May was a day to remember. Having learned that *Chloroclystis chloerata* Mab. had been noted in numbers in East Hertfordshire in 1972, I resolved this year to try for it in the Harpenden area. Nomansland Common was the obvious choice as blackthorn abounds there. After a few minutes a plump pale green larva with an interrupted pinkish dorsal stripe was dislodged from a large flowering blackthorn bush and within a few minutes a further two were beaten out; three more were beaten out a few days later and went down within hours. Four moths emerged towards the end of the month to confirm the identity of the larvae, and show *chloerata* to be present in yet another Hertfordshire locality.

Portable m.v. light at Nomansland on the 2nd produced 12 species of macro including two melanic specimens of *P. ridens*: typical *ridens* appear to be distinctly uncommon in this area, and a further melanic example was noted at Symondshyde Great Wood on the 3rd. On the 4th, back at Nomansland, portable m.v. produced only seven species, but one of these was an example of *Nycteola revayana* Scop. The weather deteriorated the following day and wet, cold and windy weather was the main feature until the 11th when I, accompanied by spouse, made a weekend trip to the New Forest. Here, portable m.v. light was run on the heathland near Lyndhurst between 9.20 and 11.00 p.m. Despite a chill wind and a clear moonlit night, five specimens of *C. cinctaria* including one very pale specimen arrived, along with several *Peridea anceps* Goeze among a total of 11 species. The following morning a ground frost was in evidence in Hollands Wood campsite! The day of the 12th produced a mixture of cloud and sunshine and two specimens of *Boloria euphrosyne* L. were seen on the railway bank near Brockenhurst in the early afternoon. In mid-afternoon we adjourned to Whiteparish where several specimens of the longhorn *Nematopogon swammerdamella* L. were taken. The sky clouded over most conveniently at dusk and a very good concourse of moths arrived at the portable m.v. Between 9.30 and 11.30 nineteen species of macro were noted including good numbers of *P. anceps*, *Ectropis consonaria* Hübn. and *Thera variata* D. & S., a few each of *C. coryli* and *N. confusalis* and one fine specimen of *Cyclophora annulata* Schulze. Two specimens of the fascinating micro *Alucita hexadactyla* L. were also taken. Warm but stormy weather was the predominant feature of the latter half of May and I spent several productive evenings with portable m.v. at Nomansland Common. The first of these was on the 17th when I took 20 species between 9.25 and 11.15, the best of which were *Eupithecia abbreviata* Steph. (several melanics), *Drymonia ruficornis* Hufn. (one female), *N. revayana* (one), *Drepana binaria* Hufn. (one) and *Chloroclystis v-ata* Haw. (two). On the 18th we made a trip to the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire where sultry and warm conditions prevailed. Portable m.v. in the Scenic Drive just off the Blakeney-Coleford

road produced a total of 34 species of macro which included an abundance of *P. anceps* (including one fine melanic male) and *N. confusalis*, several of *D. ruficornis* and *Lampropteryx suffumata* D. & S., and single specimens of *P. flammea*, *Chesias rufata* F., *Drymonia dodònaea* D. & S. and *Xanthorhoe designata* Hufn. On the 19th, at Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, I noted a number of *Anthocharis cardamines* males, and beat larvae of *Philereme transversata* Hufn. from buckthorn, also several different species of larvae from blackthorn including some *Chloroclystis rectangulata* L.

The warm, humid weather continued and on the 21st, m.v. at Symondshyde Great Wood produced 12 species including several melanic *C. coryli*, a few male *Dasychira pudibunda* L. and single specimens of *Biston betularia* L. (melanic), *Menophira abruptaria* Thunb. and *Petrophora chlorosata* Scop. The last named was distinctly scarce this year—it is usually a veritable plague in May and June. On the 22nd things began to liven up with a really outstanding night's sport at Nomansland Common when 32 species of macro came to light in two hours. Foremost amongst these were six specimens of *Lobophora halterata* Hufn. and one *Acasis viretata* Hflbn., along with a further female *D. ruficornis*, two *N. revayana*, single specimens of *Ligdia adustata* D. & S. and *Electrophaes corylata* Thunb., a few *Eupithecia exiguata* Hübn. and several each of *Lomographa temerata* D. & S. and *L. bimaculata* F.

More settled conditions ushered in the beginning of the Spring Holiday and a visit to the Chilterns with portable m.v. on the 24th produced a fine *Ptilodontella cucullina* D. & S., two *Stauropus fagi* L., numerous *Drepana cultraria* F., an abundance of *C. coryli* and at dusk a specimen of *Cepphis advenaria* Hübn. We drove on to Chipping Norton in the early hours of the 25th and later on that day visited the rough grasslands and disused quarry at Kilkenny on the Cotswolds, about six miles from Cheltenham. There *Erynnis tages* L. and *Coenonympha pamphilus* L. were common and that ubiquitous Geometrid *E. atomaria* was in great abundance and variety with some very lightly marked white females. The following day we camped at Llandogo, in the Wye Valley. Walking along the river bank nearby in the evening we flushed a number of geometrids from the herbage, the best of which was an example of *Euchoeca nebulata* Scop. We then ran the m.v. in the woods above Tintern from 9.45 until 12.45 the next morning. It was an excellent night with 55 species, the best being single specimens of *Harpyia bicuspis* Borkh. and *H. bifida* Brahm. Others of note were *C. advenaria*, *E. consonaria* (including two specimens of the form *waiensis*), *C. rufata*, *Perizoma affinitatum* Steph., *Plagodis pulveraria* L., *Abraxas sylvata* Scop., *Discoloxia blomeri* Curt., and *Eilema sororcula* Hufn. A Robinson trap operated nearby with an actinic tube attached produced 13 species including *P. pulveraria* and *X. designata*. The 27th dawned fine and bright, but skies soon clouded over, though not before I had noted several *Panemeria tenebrata* Scop. and

taken one, the first time I had seen this insect since 1963. Other species of interest were *Tyria jacobaeae* L. of which one specimen with dove-grey forewings was taken, and *Saturnia pavonia* L. the males of which were fairly common and, seemingly, in fresh condition. We journeyed back to Harpenden in the evening, arriving back at 10 p.m., whereupon I immediately hied to Nomansland Common and operated portable m.v. there until midnight. Outstanding among 40 species noted there were single specimens of *Rheumaptera cervinalis* Scop. and *Tyta luctuosa* D. & S. Also taken were two further *L. halterata*, one *A. viretata* and an abundance of *E. corylata*. On the 30th *L. halterata* and *A. viretata* were again noted at light among 31 species in the same locality.

June opened with cool days and unseasonably cold nights. On the 1st of the month, a number of *Asthena abulata* Hufn. were noted flying about an hour before sunset around a small copse midway between the outskirts of Harpenden and Nomansland Common. This is the first indication that the species occurs in substantial numbers in the immediate area. A visit to Salcey Forest near Northampton on the 3rd showed *Leptidea sinapsis* L. to be much commoner than I have ever seen it before. The weather was unsettled with fairly frequent showers and we soon departed for home, visiting a spot on the way at Dunstable Downs just below Whipsnade Zoo. There we found a small colony of *Cupido minimus* Fuessly and I was delighted to take a specimen of this butterfly with much reduced spotting on the underside. I also took two specimens of *Adscita geryon* Hübn. and noted *Aricia agestis* D. & S. and *Polyommatus icarus* Rott. in some numbers.

Much more settled conditions returned on the 6th and I took two days' hastily arranged leave and headed for the Wye Valley via the Cotswolds. At Kilkenny in the afternoon lepidoptera were in abundance and a specimen that I took of *Coenonympha pamphilus* L. had the apical eyespot practically obsolete. *E. atomaria* was again common, and several each of *C. minimus*, *Perizoma albulata* D. & S. and *Parasemia plantaginis* L. were seen. This area is noted for a colony of *Zygaena trifolii* Esp. with a high percentage of confluent specimens and this occasion was no exception with several fine examples being seen. Continuing on my journey, I took the motorway down to the Wye Valley, arriving an hour before sunset. After pitching camp, I walked along the river bank, taking specimens of *X. designata*, *P. affinitatum*, and *E. nebulata*, and then drove to the woods above Tintern which had given me such excellent sport ten days previously. On this clear, but warm night, the portable m.v. produced 67 species including several *D. blomeri*, a female *L. halterata*, *Tethea* or D. & S., *Hydriomena impulviata* D. & S., *B. crassalis*, *Lithacodia pygarga* Hufn., and a few worn *P. pulveraria*. I returned to my lonely tent at 1 a.m. and the following morning headed once again for Charterhouse. This area has been designated an educational nature reserve so its continued survival is hopefully guaranteed. There are still some

prolific spots outside the reserve boundaries and these produced two specimens of *P. tenebrata* and one of *Adscita statice* L., several *Boloria selene* D. & S., one *Euphydryas aurinia* Rott. and a specimen of *P. icarus* with reduced hindwing spotting. From Charterhouse I proceeded to Bratton Camp near Westbury, Wilts., where many butterflies were on the wing. *Lysandra bellargus* Rott. was fairly common and is clearly recovering in numbers in this area. A few each of *E. aurinia* and *Hamearis lucina* L. were seen and *P. geryon* was very common in one area. *C. minimus*, *Erynnis tages* L. and *P. icarus* were all common, and I took an *A. agestis* with reduced spotting on the hindwing. Leaving this productive spot, I drove to Surrey where at White Downs I noted 58 species of moth including *C. advenaria*, *P. affinitatum*, *Acrionicta alni* L. and several each of *Lacanobia contigua* D. & S. and *Agrotis cinerea* D. & S. Operations continued until well after midnight.

The following day, the 8th, I returned to Harpenden briefly, collected my wife and departed again for the Breck district. That evening at our usual fenland venue we used both portable m.v. and an actinic trap. Moths came freely to the sheet and by 1 a.m. we had recorded 67 species. *Oligia fasciuncula* Haw. was very abundant and in great variety, while *Earias clorana* L. and *Lacanobia suasa* D. & S. were both fairly common. Other species of interest included *Ochropacha duplaris* L., *Apamea unanimitis* Hübn., *Eupithecia subumbrata* D. & S. and *E. linariata* D. & S. However, it was when we went to inspect the actinic traps that the real surprises came in the form of a fine *Mythimna obsoleta* Hübn. inside the trap and a *Lithostege griseata* D. & S. resting on the grass nearby.

On the 9th we drove on to the Norfolk Broads, pitching camp near Potter Heigham. I wished to renew my acquaintance with *Papilio machaon* L. and to introduce my wife to this splendid insect, and so we both walked up the long straight lane from the main Yarmouth road to Heigham Sound where we were almost immediately rewarded by the sight of a number of *machaon* flying some distance away among the reed-beds, and occasionally swooping over the dyke on which we were standing. Although local, this butterfly seems abundant where it occurs, and it is my confirmed opinion that, owing to the inaccessibility of many of its haunts, it is highly unlikely to be exterminated by even the most avaricious of collectors. The area we visited abounded with almost impenetrable brambles, thistle, nettles and burdock on the dykes, and treacherous terrain was in evidence among the reed-beds. We spent that evening with portable m.v. on the edge of a large reed-bed about a mile from Potter Heigham. The outstanding feature was the abundance of *Senta flammea* Curt., about 50 being seen in just over two hours. With these were five *Simyra albovenosa* Goeze, three *Hydriomena impluviata* D. & S., and a single *Spilosoma urticae* Esp. *Spilosoma lubricipeda* L. was very common, and one specimen was so marked as to be wrongly identified as a second *urticae*. I did not find out my mistake until the next

day. In all 52 species of macro were noted along with the Pyrales *Nascia cilialis* Hübn., *Cataclysta lemnata* L., and *Nymphula nymphaea* L. Thus ended four days of hectic and very profitable collecting. Back in Hertfordshire my garden m.v. trap was graced by *C. cucullina* on the 11th, but portable m.v. at Nomansland on the following day produced only 26 species, the best of which was *Eupithecia venosata* F.

Dungeness was our venue on the evening of the 15th where, despite a stiff breeze, 47 species of macro put in an appearance, the most noteworthy of which were *Arctia villica* L. (four), *Hadena albimacula* Borkh. (several) and *A. cinerea* (several, mostly past their best). *Deilephila elpenor* L. was common but only a few *D. porcellus* L. were noted. *Hepialus lupulinus* L. was abundant at dusk and included some almost white specimens. Owing to the ignominious collapse of our inflatable tent earlier, we were obliged to return to Harpenden that same night, arriving there just in time to hear the first blackbird serenading the dawn! After a few hours snatched sleep we were off again, on another trip to Breckland. During the late afternoon we explored an area around Herringswell and beat two specimens of *Idaea trigeminata* Haw. from bushes bordering a lane. Several males of *Macrothylacia rubi* L. were seen on some open ground farther on, and two specimens of the local Pyrale, *Homoeosoma sinuella* L. Once again we worked our chosen locality for m.v. light, the fen near Lakenheath, and despite some breeze and a full moon, boxed some fine moths including further specimens of *L. griseata* and *M. obsoleta*, *Epirrhoe rivata* Hfhn. (four), *Sideridis albicolon* Hübn. (one), *Heliophobus reticulata* Goeze. (one) and *Acronicta tridens* D. & S. (one). A total of 70 species of macro were noted in addition to three specimens of the Tortricoid moth *Endothenia quadrimaculana* Haw.

Less settled weather ushered in the following week but by Friday the 22nd it had improved again and we journeyed to Hampshire to operate portable m.v. at Havant Thicket. Despite clear skies and rather cool conditions I recorded 53 species of macro including two *Apoda avellana* L. and one very fresh *Momium alpium* Osbeck. *Comibaena pustulata* Hufn. was common including many in mint condition; other interesting species were *Semiothisa notata* L. (two), *H. impluviata* (one) and *S. lutea* (a virtually spotless male). Among numerous Tortrices I took a specimen of the local *Epinotia demarniana* Fischer. We then returned to stay with Mr. and Mrs. Peter Rogers who had most kindly offered to put us up for that night. The following day we drove on to the New Forest, and concentrated our daytime activities on an area of boggy heathland near Picket Post. Half a dozen specimens of *Eustrotia uncula* Clerck. were taken in the wetter parts of this area in the late afternoon and *Crambus pascuella* L. was everywhere. We operated the portable m.v. on the heaths between Lyndhurst and Beaulieu recording 50 species of macro between 10 p.m. and 12.30 a.m.

(to be continued)